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ABSTRACT

Thirty two-year and four-year colleges and universities from among the 91 serving the largest percentage of Native American students were surveyed as a follow-up to a similar survey in 1988. The purpose was to obtain data on Native Americans enrolled in higher education and to ascertain what factors contribute to their success or failure. It was discovered that reliable data are not available for Native American student performance and outcomes, financial aid, student retention and matriculation, and Native American curricular offerings. The principle findings of the survey were: 43 percent of Native American students attend full time; the graduation rate of Native American students is 25 percent; the first-year retention rate is 45 percent; the most frequently identified factors that hinder college-level achievement of Native Americans are inadequate preparation, poor adjustment to the college environment, personal and family problems, and financial difficulties; the average number of Native American professors at the institutions surveyed is 10; to improve retention and graduation rates for Native American students, colleges and universities have focused on precollegiate programs, organized tutoring, developmental courses, Native American counselors, Native American content courses, and Native American student organizations; the number of Native American teacher training programs has decreased slightly; only 25% of responding colleges sponsor distance learning or extension programs for Native Americans; and increased financing is critical to the survival of tribal colleges. Includes the survey questionnaire and responses. (TD)

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ED 414 108

The Native American Experience in Higher Education Turning Around the Cycle of Failure II

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September 11, 1997

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RC 021200

Principle Findings of the Native American Survey

1. A majority of Native American college students (131,304) attend the 91 colleges and universities which enroll 4% or more Native American students. The median enrollment at those schools is 1828 students of whom 263 are Native American; 43% attend full time. The average tuition is $1,263 per year and the average financial Aid Award from all schools is $1, 260.

2. The graduation rate of Native American students (averaged over the last five years) is 25%, slightly under the 27.3% reported in our previous survey in 1988.

3. The first year retention rate of Native American students is 45%, averaged over a five year period and virtually unchanged since the 1988 survey (46.7%).

4. The key factors which hinder Native American achievement and retention at colleges and universities have been identified as: inadequate academic preparation, financial difficulties, personal or family problems and difficulty in adjusting to university life. A secondary factor is racial and cultural discrimination.

5. The average number of Native American professors at colleges and universities Native Americans attend is 10, up slightly since the 1988 survey (9).

6. To improve the retention and graduation rate of Native American students colleges and universities have focused on a select number of academic and support services programs: pre-collegiate programs, organized tutoring, developmental (remedial) courses, Native American counselors, Native American content courses and Native American student organizations.

7. Although there is a urgent need for Native Americans to achieve in public schools at all levels, the number of Native American teacher training programs have not increased in the nine year period since our previous survey. In fact, our survey indicates a slight decrease in the programs.

8. 3/4 of the colleges responding to the survey indicated that they were located within 50 miles from either rural or urban Native American communities , only 25% of them sponsor distance learning/extension programs for Native Americans. As over one-half of Native Americans attend post-secondary education part-time, many commuting, the lack of easy access to college level programs is an additional barrier to Native American college enrollment.

9. 25,000 Native Americans attend twenty-seven Tribal Colleges. They are underfunded and operate on a financial shoe string. Increased financing is critical to their survival. They provide essential educational services to Native Americans and Indian Tribes, previously unavailable.

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In June 1997, we sent the attached questionnaire to 91 two-and four-year colleges and universities which serve the largest percentage of Native American students. We used four percent Native Americans as the cutoff for the survey as reported to the U.S. Office of Education and printed in the Chronicle of Higher Education (May 23, 1997). The purpose of this survey was to obtain more reliable data on Native Americans enrolled in higher education and to ascertain what factors contribute to their success and failure in college. The survey was addressed to academic deans with a request to the dean to forward the questionnaire to the individual or individuals most intimately associated with Native American programs and services. We received 30 valid responses.** [1] This is a follow up to a previous survey on Native American Higher Education conducted in 1988, Robert N. Wells, Jr., "The Native American Experience in Higher Education: Turning Around the Cycle of Failure," presented at the Minorities in Education Conference, Hofstra University, March 10, 1989.*

In addition to the close-ended responses we received numerous comments and open-ended responses to the survey questions. In particular, we were encouraged by the support for the project and the eagerness of the respondents to receive the survey results. All participating institutions will receive the tallied questionnaires and we will be reporting the survey to Native American communities and post-secondary institutions through ERIC/CRESS, Las Cruces, New Mexico. Our intention in undertaking this survey and its predecessor was to build a better data base about Native American educational experiences. However, there continues to be a paucity of accurate information on college

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* ERIC/CRESS, Las Cruces, New Mexico

** Three additional survey results were received after the survey data was tabulated.

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outcomes on Native Americans, matriculation and retention rates, factors which contribute to institutional holding power for Native Americans and barriers to Native American achievement. Many of the questions which were included in the survey were drawn from our own experience with American students as well as the issues and topics which emerged in the fifteen conferences on the American Indian Student in Higher Education which were held at St. Lawrence University from 1970-1984.

One obvious result of the questionnaire was that most institutions, including those with large Native American populations, lack a good data base on Native American student performance and outcomes. In particular, we were very interested in learning more about financial aid sources and support, student retention and matriculation and Native American curricular offerings. The largest response to any of these survey questions was 67 percent. Most other responses ranged form 14-22 institutions responding out of 30, indicating that in these above mentioned categories hard data is still difficult to obtain. Twenty-one institutions answered the question regarding the percentage of Native American students graduating. The reported matriculation rate of 25 percent is disturbingly low and less than the previous survey response in 1988 (27.3%). More than half of those who leave before graduation do so in their first year (first year retention rate over five years is 45%).

Seventy percent of the institutions responding to the survey reported financial resources from all sources (including loans) to be $331,737 or $1,260 per year per student. The average tuition at the 29 reporting schools was $1,263. With charges for room and meals averaging $2500 or more, and commuting costs at $1,000, most Native

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American students need to come up with $1,500-2,500 per year out of pocket costs. The simple truth is most Native Americans and their families simply do not have the financial resources required to pay their college bills. The drop in full-time Native American college enrollment, particularly males, reflects those economic pressures and the squeeze created by reduced federal and institutional aid to college students. In responses to our questionnaire, financial difficulty ranks among the top four factors hindering college level achievement for Native Americans (7.5 out of 10 maximum).

A positive note in the survey is the number of institutions responding to the question on support services for Native American students. Twenty-eight institutions indicated they provided remedial or developmental courses while 30 or more schools said they had organized tutoring, 21 Native American counselors, 25 Native American student organizations, and 24 had Native American content courses. Thirteen institutions indicated they had additional support services and these are listed on page 11 of Appendix.

Richard Richardson in a provocative essay entitled "If Minority Students are to Succeed in Higher Education, Every Rung of the Educational Ladder Must be in Place," printed in the January 11, 1989 issue of The Chronicle of Higher Education enumerates the necessary rungs on the educational ladder to enable minority students to succeed. They are:

Early intervention in the public schools to strengthen preparation and improve students' educational planning.

Summer "bridge" programs to accustom minority students to college-level coursework and the campus atmosphere before they begin college.

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Tailored financial-aid programs including policies that recognize students may not be able to contribute as much in summer earnings to their aid packages if they participate in bridge programs.

Strong academic-assessment programs, coupled with courses designed to offset gaps in preparation.

Adequate tutoring services, learning laboratories and organized "mentoring" programs.

Intrusive academic advising to guide selection of course and to intervene before small problems become major.

Career guidance to translate nonspecific educational goals into programs of study where coursework and desired outcomes are clearly linked.

A number of institutions (16 of 30), responded to our questionnaire that they had either early intervention programs or summer "bridge" programs to improve the transition of Native American students from high school to college. Twenty-eight of the responding institutions provided remedial or developmental courses to "offset gaps in preparation." Seventeen institutions responded both under the question of support services and the one which asked about programs which contributed to the achievement and retention of Native American students, that they had developed orientation and attendance programs, counseling and special faculty advising programs, financial aid programs and career development services (see p. 11 of Appendix).

The four factors most identified in the questionnaire responses as hindering college level achievement of Native Americans are: inadequate preparation, adjustment to the college environment, personal and family problems and financial difficulties (see 15a-f responses in *Appendix*). We have addressed the question of financial aid and its importance in Native American retention earlier in this paper. The majority of responding

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developed organized tutoring programs, developmental and remedial courses, structured advisement programs and pre-college orientation and academic bridge programs to respond to the Native American students' lack of adequate academic preparation and unfamiliarity with a college environment (see responses to question #12 and #9f in Appendix). Personal and family problems continue to plague Native American students in higher education. Thirty schools ranked this problem just behind inadequate preparation and financial difficulties as a factor hindering academic achievement and success. In question #15f (other factors hindering Native American student achievement) a number of these personal and family problems emerge: lack of family support, homesickness, low self-esteem, substance abuse, desire to remain on the reservation, maintenance of cultural identity, inadequate transportation (commuting students) and difficulty in adjusting to bureaucratic procedures at colleges.

Only a strong counseling and advisement system at the institution can uncover and deal with these personal and family circumstances confronting the Native American student. Unless there is a support system which is proactive and intrusive in nature, the Native American student will often split before the academic, financial or personal problem is addressed. In question #9c, 21 of 30 institutions responding indicated they had Native American counselors. Twenty-six responded that the institution had a Native American student organization (see Appendix questions #9c, d). Thirty schools reported an average of 10 Native American faculty/staff at the institution.

Along with the development of improved counseling programs, the establishment of Native American student organizations and increased numbers of Native American

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faculty and staff, the development of academic programs and concentrations in Native American students has been an important influence on Native American student performance. Twenty-four institutions responded that Native American content courses were in the curriculum and of the 14 schools that identified the number of courses, the median was seven courses (question #9e, Appendix). Ten schools, 33 percent of those responding, offer a Native American Studies major.

Another positive finding in the questionnaire responses was the number of institutions which indicated they had Native American teacher training programs (12). As over 50 percent of Native American students attend college part-time, or commute, or both, the drop in the number of college level extension programs is regrettable. However, the number of schools providing academic extension programs which reach reservations, rural and urban Native Americans, (7) had dropped from 22 in our previous survey. A critical need in public education is Native American teachers. The most promising remedy of the Native American teacher shortage is teacher education programs at institutions with a high percentage of Native American students. Forty percent of the 30 responding schools indicated they had Native American teacher training programs.

In our survey nine institutions indicated they were commuter or primarily commuter schools. Although we did not ask how many Native American students commute, the survey reveals that over one half (57 percent) of the 131, 304 Native American college students attend part-time (questions 2 and 4 in Appendix). Furthermore, 25 of the respondents indicated that their institution was within 50 miles of a Native American community, either reservation, rural or urban (question 17, Appendix).

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It has been our contention since the earliest days of the Institute if the American Indian Student in Higher Education that a very important mission for higher education was to serve non-traditional Native American students where they work and live. There are over 500 Native American communities in the United States, many in very remote areas, and not easily accessible to post-secondary institutions. Educational opportunity for Native American in locations relatively close to their home environment addresses many of the problems which frustrate the Native American college student, e.g. finances. relevant curriculum, homesickness and adjustment to college life. Moreover, distance learning and extension programs or institution location, on or near Native American reservations or an urban center, serve a target group which has been long neglected in higher education - adult Native Americans. Without the presence of 27 Tribal Colleges this problem would be even greater.

Retention and matriculation rates for Native American students continue to remain unacceptably low. Although institutional support programs and pre-college intervention programs have increased, the Native American student's opportunity to attend college and succeed in his or her academic endeavor, inadequate preparation and financial and personal/family problems continue to be a major bar to achievement. The financial aid problem can be as elemental as the inability to correctly fill out the Financial Aid Form or unawareness of financial aid sources. Unless an institution devises a financial safety net for the Native American student, he or she will invariably face frustrating delays in receiving federal and state financial entitlements, particularly BIA aid.

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Over the past eight years positive developments in Native American higher education have been the increase in institutional support services, more early intervention programs for college bound Native Americans, expanded educational services for commuting and part-time students, the development of Native American teacher training programs and Native American academic major programs and concentrations. Twenty years ago most of the above referenced support services and academic opportunities were virtually non-existent for Native Americans. Hopefully, federal and state cutbacks and institutional retrenchment will not retard the further development of support programs for Native Americans or curtail current efforts. Of particular concern is the low funding level by Congress of the 27 Indian Controlled Colleges which enroll a high percentage of Native American students in both traditional and non-traditional programs.

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Name American Student Questionnaire
St. Lawrence University
Canton, New York 13617

July 1, 1997

Name of institution (optional) 30 responses/91 sent

1. Undergraduate enrollment in current academic year 1,701 median

2. Type of institution: two year 19 four year 11
   public 24 primary residential 11
   private 4 primary commuter 6
   both 2 both 3

3. Number of Native American students enrolled 263

4. Percentage of Native American students enrolled full time 43%

5. Tuition (academic year, full time) $ 1,263

6. Financial aid sources for Native American students in the most recent academic year
   a) Institutional scholarships, fellowships, and grants $ 38,327 (22)
   b) Loans and work study $ 87,212 (21)
   c) Federal/state government, BIA aid $ 206,198 (17)

7. Matriculation rate of Native American students over the past five years (The percentage of Native American students who graduated from those who enrolled): 25%

8. Retention rate of first year Native American students over the past five years (if available): 45%

9. Does your institution include any of the following support services and activities for Native American students?
   a) organized tutoring yes 30 no
   b) remediation (developmental courses in either math, reading, or English composition) yes 28 no 2
   c) Native American counselors yes 21 no 8
   d) Native American student organization or club yes 26 no 4
   e) Native American content courses in curriculum yes 24 no 6
      How many? 7+

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f) other support services (please specify) see attached (13)

10. Number of Native American who are faculty or professional staff 10

11. Does your institution offer an academic major or concentration in Native American studies? yes 10 no 20

12. Does your institution sponsor academic or enrichment programs for pre-college Native American students? e.g. Upward Bound, Talent Search, Summer workshops, etc.
yes 16 no 14

13. Does your institution sponsor teacher training programs for Native Americans?
yes 12 no 16

14. Does your institution sponsor extension programs which reach on reservation, rural, or urban Native Americans? yes 7 no 23

15. Listed below are some factors which have been cited as hindering college level achievement for Native Americans. Please rank each item from 1-10, with ten representing the greatest difficulty for Native Americans enrolled at your institution.

a) inadequate preparation 6.8
b) adjustment to college environment 6
c) financial difficulty 7.4
d) racial or cultural discrimination 5.1
e) personal or family problems 6.6
f) other (please specify) see attached (8)

16. Please list below any programs at your institution which you believe have contributed to Native American students academic achievement and retention.

(16)

17. Is there a Native American community, on or off reservation, or urban, within 50 miles of your institution?

50 miles	yes 26	no 2
100 miles	yes 15	no 1

Comments (please use reverse side): see attached

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Appendix

9) f. Strong ties and support of local Native community and Native alumni
American Indian Advisor
Computer labs
Intern and mentor programs
Financial aid sources (2)
Writing center
Native American Center, Director/Advisor
Advisement and support center (4)
Career services
Student opportunity services (2)
Multicultural student services (2)
Trio programs (2)
Liaison with tribal officials for scholarship procedures/admissions
Carl Perkins
Indian Center
Alcohol and Drug House Center
Liaison from the Financial Aid office to Tribal Higher Education Commission

15) f. Housing availability
Lack of child care
Lack of transportation (5)
Adjustment to school and urban environment (2)
Commitment of students to college responsibilities
Low self-esteem
Access to technology (phones, computers, faxes, copiers)
Motivation
No cultural diversity on campus
Education is not a cultural priority but tribe pushing educational achievement and self-sufficiency

16. Native American orientation
Culture Club
Tutoring programs
Achievement programs (2)
Trio programs (2)
Student support services (7)
Della Keats (U. Alaska, Anchorage)
American Indian Student Association (2)
Health Career Opportunity Program
Intrusive counseling (2)

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16. Student Center
Native American Studies Department
Branch campus geared toward Native American educational needs
Academic counseling (3)
Developmental courses
Honor Society
Special academic programs linked to tribal and local needs (2)

17. Support from Native American community students - Alaska
In Oklahoma Native American population is spread out throughout the state

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